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FOR THE

SACRAMENTAL TEST,

AS A JUST SECURITY FOR THE

CHURCH ESTABLISHED,

AND VERY CONDUCIVE TO THE

WELFARE OF THE STATE.

By A. ELLYS, D.D.
LATE LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S.

THE THIRD EDITION.

HUMBLY SUBMITTED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF

BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT,

AND TO ALL THE

WELL-WISHERS OF OUR CONSTITUTION.

LONDON:

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

READER.

"AS ſome apology may be thought
"neceſſary for the liberty here taken
" in ſoliciting the attention of the Publick
" to the following Tract, the Editor flat-
" ters himſelf that it will be a ſufficient
" anſwer to all who may make ſuch de-
" mand upon him, to declare that the
" candour, moderation and good ſenſe
" which ſhine forth in the excellent Au-
" thor, were what principally recom-
" mended it to his notice; and that, upon
" a more attentive peruſal of it, the caſe
" between the Diſſenters and he Vindica-
" tors of the Teſt-Act appeared to be ſo
" fairly ſtated, and the argument in favour
" of the latter ſo well ſupported, as in his
" opinion, to carry conviction along with
" it.

" How it may appear to others, he
" knows not; but he thought he could
" not better diſcharge the duty of a good
" Citizen than by thus introducing again
" an advocate for the cauſe of liberty, pro-

" perly ſo called, who, if he cannot con-
" vince his opponents of the unreaſonable-
" neſs of their demands, will ſhew them
" that a controverſy even upon the ſubject
" of religion may be ſupported without the
" leaſt acrimony or reproach towards the
" opinions or perſons of thoſe who differ
" from him.

" That this Chriſtian temper of mind
" may be the leading characteriſtick of all
" who ſhall in the preſent inſtance engage
" in the ſame cauſe, and that the reſult of
" their honeſt endeavours may be a firm
" and laſting eſtabliſhment of CIVIL and
" RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, is the ſincere
" and ardent wiſh of

" THE EDITOR."

A

PLEA

FOR THE

SACRAMENTAL TEST, &c. [A]

THE Proteſtant diſſenters from the church of England have lately made very great complaints of their being obliged to receive the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper once in this church, whenever they take an office in the ſtate. They have publicly affirmed, that the laws [B] by which this is required are unjuſt, repugnant to the end for which this ſacrament was ordained, and productive of much impiety in thoſe by

[A] This piece was firſt publiſhed in the year 1736.

[B] By the 13th of Charles II. ſtat. 2d, chap. 1ſt, it is enacted, That no perſon ſhall be capable of being elected into the office of mayor of any city, town, &c. or in any other office concerning the government of them,—that ſhall not have, within one year next before ſuch election, taken the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the rites of the church of England.

And by the 25th of Charles II. chap. 2, it is enacted, That all and every perſon or perſons, that ſhall be admitted into any office or offices, civil or military, ſhall receive the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the uſage of the church of England, within three months after his or their admittance into or receiving their ſaid authority or employment, in ſome public church, upon ſome Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday, immediately after divine ſervice and ſermon.

whom, in ſuch caſes, it is unworthily received. They have declared their reſolutions of applying to the legiſlature for relief; and in order to do it with the greateſt weight, have held ſeveral numerous aſſemblies of their friends, in which committees were appointed to act on their behalf, towards procuring a repeal of the Corporation and Teſt-acts, and were ſent in form to ſolicit the miniſters of ſtate on this account. And though, upon the reports which theſe committees made in the years 1732, and 1733, that thoſe were not fit times for bringing the matter before the parliament, the diſſenters were prevailed upon to defer it; yet many of them did this with great reluctance, and not without profeſſing that they were determined, very ſoon, to purſue this point with all poſſible vigour. According to which reſolutions, they have been ever ſince making ſuch applications as they judge would be moſt ſerviceable to their cauſe.

In this ſtate of things, it cannot but be right in any one who approves the eſtabliſhment of the church of England, to vindicate as far as he can thoſe laws which contribute very much to its ſupport, from the charges made upon them, and to ſhew that they are not only juſt, but expedient to be continued. This has indeed been done ſome time ago by an excellent writer [c], who fixed upon the true principle for the defence of theſe laws, and ſaid as much as was then neceſſary to maintain it. But as, ſince that time, ſome objections have been made, and the general principle has with great freedom been treated as falſe; it may be not improper to offer ſome farther thoughts upon this ſubject. I purpoſe to do it in the following papers; with regard to which, I have only to deſire, that they may be read as I write them, with hearty concern for the laſting ſafety and welfare of our country.

In order to vindicate the laws which enjoin the ſacramental teſt, the firſt ſtep muſt be to clear them from the charge of injuſtice, which the diſſenters make upon

[c] Dr. Sherlock, late Lord Biſhop of London, in his Vindication of the Corporation and Teſt-acts. Printed A. D. 1718.

them

them in very invidiouſly aggravating terms. They endeavour to make good this charge by alledging, that as free-born ſubjects and well-affected to the civil-government, they have a natural right to a capacity of ſerving their country in all public offices, which they might often do to its great advantage. But the laws that oblige them, as a neceſſary condition of their holding offices, to communicate with the church of England, do, without juſt reaſon, intrench upon, and, in the caſe of many of them, quite defeat this capacity of offices to which they have a right; and therefore thoſe laws are unjuſt. This, I think, is the reaſoning of the diſſenters upon this ſubject, in its utmoſt force. In oppoſition to which, I humbly conceive, that the reſtraining condition thus put upon their capacity of offices is juſt; in regard that if all Proteſtant Diſſenters were capable of holding public offices, without the ſacramental teſt, or ſome other equivalent means of excluding thoſe who are ſo averſe to the church of England, as to think that communion with her is unlawful; the conſequence would be, that the eſtabliſhment of this church, which is of great advantage to the ſtate, would be endangered, and this danger would produce animoſities and conteſts among the people, which would be of very ill conſequences to the ſafety or the intereſt of the ſtate: and therefore the diſſenters capacity of offices is juſtly reſtrained, on a principle generally acknowledged to be true; to wit, that the civil rights of ſubjects ought to be ſubmitted to, and may be diminiſhed for the public good. I have given our whole reaſoning thus in ſhort and without diſguiſe, that the reader may the better make a judgment of it; for in a matter of this conſequence to our country, or indeed in any queſtion debated in public, to raiſe clouds of duſt in order to cover a bad cauſe, is a procedure unworthy of a man of probity, with whom no motives ought to prevail above his regard for truth and right. But that the force of this argument may be duly apprehended, it will be neceſſary to make ſome enlargement upon the ſeveral particulars it contains.

For which purpoſe, the firſt point to be conſidered is, whether the admiſſion of the Proteſtant Diſſenters to a

capacity of offices, without ſome ſuch reſtraint as the ſacramental teſt, will not, in the natural courſe of things, endanger the preſent eſtabliſhment of the church of England? That the Preſbyterians, who of all the ſectaries come the neareſt to this church in doctrine and diſcipline, would yet deſire the ſubverſion of her eſtabliſhment, if they had power to effect it, Mr. Rapin Thoyras, who knew them well, and was not prejudiced againſt them, was entirely ſatisfied [D]. And it muſt indeed be evident, to any one who conſiders the general diſpoſitions of the bulk of mankind, together with the hiſtory of our own nation. Men are naturally deſirous that their own way of thinking ſhould prevail. They are wont to approve and favour perſons of the ſame opinion with themſelves, in preference to others; eſpecially when they think, not only that their own opinions and practices are right, but that thoſe of their opponents are ſinful, and that therefore it will be for the honour of God to have the latter be ſuppreſſed, and their own be promoted. Inducements of this kind are generally ſufficient to put them upon endeavouring to ſpread their own notions; but moſt of all, when any ſecular advantage may be gained by ſo doing; for then human paſſions, mixed and covered with religious pretences, and thereby appearing to be juſtified, make them frequently act with extraordinary vehemence.

Theſe are ſo much the common workings of human nature, that the law-givers in all ſtates have thought themſelves obliged to guard in ſome degree againſt them, for fear of their producing ſuch enmities and conteſts among the ſubjects of different religions, as might in the end diſturb the public. Accordingly, as it has been a maxim, in all civilized ſtates, to eſtabliſh ſome

[D] Diſſertation ſur les Whigs et les Tories, tom x. de l'hiſtoire d'Angleterre, à la Haye 1727, p. 253. "Il eſt certain que, ſi les Preſbyteriens ſe voyent jamais en êtat d'agir ſans oppoſition, ils ne ſeront point contentes qu'ils n'ayent ruiné de fonds en comble la Hierarchie, et en general toute l'egliſe Anglicane." It is certain, that if ever the Preſbyterians are in a condition to act without being oppoſed, they will never be contented till they have totally deſtroyed the Hierarchy, and in general the whole church of England.

religion;

religion; ſo, whenever there has been any other religion profeſſed by ſuch numbers of the ſubjects, as to be likely to riſe into competition with the eſtabliſhed one, the governors have always thought it fit that public offices of truſt and profit ſhould be confined, as far as the circumſtances of the ſtate would allow, to the profeſſors of the latter; in order to give it ſuch a ſuperiority as would be requiſite to preſerve the public peace. I need not give inſtances of this conduct to thoſe who are competently ſkilled in hiſtory: they muſt know it has been generally uſed by the wiſeſt and beſt governed nations in the world.

Some few inſtances indeed may be given of countries, in which there have not been either any laws excluding all non-conformiſts to the eſtabliſhed religion from employments in the ſtate, or any religious teſts deſigned for that purpoſe; but their governors have been at liberty to give offices to ſuch perſons when they ſhould think it proper, and have actually employed them upon ſome occaſions. The diſſenters alledged, that this is the caſe in the United-Provinces of the Netherlands, and in ſome parts of Germany. But in anſwer to theſe inſtances I muſt obſerve, that the political conſtitutions of thoſe countries are ſo different from that of England, that no juſt argument can be drawn from their practice on ſome particular occaſions, to prove what ought to be done among us. In thoſe countries no offices of truſt or profit, and much leſs any ſeats in the legiſlature, can be obtained by applications to the people only, without the approbation of perſons in the government. For even in [E] Holland, the burghers at large of the ſeveral towns have no ſhare at all in the choice of deputies to the ſtates, nor of their own magiſtrates, ſenators, or other perſons in employment civil or military. The right of chuſing all theſe, and diſpoſing of all poſts of truſt or profit, lies either in the ſenate of each town, or in the provincial or general ſtates. And a very great majority of theſe being Cal-

[E] See Sir William Temple's Obſervations on the United Provinces of the Netherlands, chap. ii.

viniſts,

viniſts, they have it in their power effectually to hinder perſons of any other religion from coming in among them; ſo that they have no need of any poſitive law, or any religious teſt to exclude them. And the like means of excluſion are equally needleſs in Pruſſia, and other parts of Germany; in which the princes being abſolute, have the magiſtracies and every thing elſe at their own diſpoſal, if they think fit; and therefore they need not fear having more perſons than they deſire in public poſts, of a religion different from the eſtabliſhed one. They want no ſtanding laws to keep them out. And yet it is farther obſervable, that even in thoſe countries, the non-conformiſts thus employed have generally been but few at a time; they appear to have been taken rather out of neceſſity, or particular convenience to the ſtate, than out of free choice, and they have been made uſe of in thoſe caſes only, when there has been no ground to apprehend that the religion of the ſtate would be endangered or affected by them: all which circumſtances plainly ſhew that thoſe nations which at any time have taken this courſe, have been as ſenſible as others of the natural diſpoſition men have to promote their own religion, and that therefore due care ought to be taken not to truſt much power in the hands of perſons ill affected to that religion which is eſtabliſhed.

Now, are the diſſenters from the church of England to be more ſafely truſted than any other men in any age or country of the world? Are they free from the common paſſions and deſires of mankind? Will they have no zeal for propagating their opinions in religion, nor any concern for advancing their ſecular intereſts? Will they never want to have a ſhare of thoſe revenues and privileges which the church of England enjoys, excluſive of them? Will they never be uneaſy at being forced to contribute to the maintenance of the clergy of that church which they think ſo exceptionable? Would they not, if they had power ſufficient, endeavour to put themſelves and their religion upon a more advantageous foot? Perhaps ſome perſons among them, who know what their preſent intereſt requires, may ſmoothly profeſs that they ſhall not aim at any thing more than an abolition of

the teſt. But the bare profeſſions of intereſted parties cannot juſtly expect to have credit given them, in a point of great importance to the public. There ought to be ſomewhat better grounds for making a judgment of what may probably be expected from the diſſenters, in caſe they ſhould be truſted with ſo much power, as I ſhall hereafter ſhew that the repeal of the Corporation and Teſt-Acts would let fall into their hands. And one of the beſt means to judge rightly what they would do for the future, is to conſider both what the temper and conduct of their predeceſſors in the ſeparation have all along been towards the church of England, and how far the preſent diſſenters appear to reſemble them: for the like diſpoſitions and opportunities will be apt to produce the like effects, in every age. Let us then take a ſhort and general view of the conduct and temper of the diſſenters, ſince their firſt ſeparation from the church till the preſent time.

The firſt objections made by the Puritans againſt the church, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, were chiefly on account of the habits that were enjoined to be uſed by the clergy, and of the ceremonies to be practiſed by them and the people in the public worſhip. Theſe habits and ceremonies were in great meaſure the ſame that are at preſent uſed in our church: and were then retained by the queen, not out of any ſuperſtitious regard to them (for ſhe expreſly and publickly declared the contrary) but partly in order to maintain a fit decency in the worſhip of God, and much more out of a charitable deſire to keep as many as poſſible of the middle and lower ſort of people in the communion of the church. The Queen well knew that they were very much taken with outward forms, and were averſe to have any great alterations made in that religion which they had been uſed to. While, therefore, ſhe laid aſide all thoſe things that were really unlawful, ſhe thought it would be expedient to let the miniſtring habits, and a few other ſuch things, indifferent in their nature, continue to be uſed; becauſe theſe might contribute greatly to keep many of thoſe people in the church, and thereby get time for their being better inſtructed, and fixed in her

her communion, who, if they had ſeen all the forms of public worſhip at once entirely changed, would, probably, have been ſo much ſhocked and offended, that they would have gone over to the church of Rome. This deſign, and the ſucceſs of the Queen in her proceedings, were plainly acknowledged even by Sanders a Popiſh writer [c] who ſays, "that ſhe contributed very "much to the firmneſs and eſtabliſhment of her hereſy, "by not leaving the affair (of the reformation) to the "humourſome management of the new clergy, by "whoſe goſpel-liberty it had long ſince gone off into "ſmoke; unleſs it had, by this human policy, been "kept in bounds and ſupported." As theſe were ſufficiently known to be the motives of the Queen's conduct, and as the things enjoined were really indifferent in their own nature, it is wonderful that ſo much difficulty could be made about them. However, as ſome of thoſe who at firſt had ſcruples were men of otherwiſe valuable characters, and peaceably diſpoſed, the Queen was willing to connive at their non-conformity, in hopes that time would ſoften and diſſolve their groundleſs prejudices. She not only bore, for ſeveral years, with their irregularities of this kind, but permitted many of them to continue poſſeſſed of their benefices, and even dignities in the church. But this forbearance on her part was far from having its deſired effect. The Puritans grew more attached to their principles, and more violent in their conduct. They openly declared againſt all impoſitions in religion, though of things indifferent in their own nature, and enjoined by the higheſt authority in church and ſtate. They reſolved not to be quiet, unleſs the public eſtabliſhment was altered, and their own favourite platform of church-government and diſcipline was ſettled in its room. They made no ſcruple to affirm publickly in formal admonitions to the parlia-

[c] Nicol. Sanderi Hiſtoria Schiſmatis Anglicani. *Coloniæ Agrippinæ*, A. D. 1628, page 283. Certe fecit plurimum ad ſtabilitatem firmitatemque hæreſeos, quod non permittebatur res iſtius novi cleri libidini, quæ jamdudum hâc libertate evangelicâ abiiſſet in fumum, niſi fuiſſet hâc humanâ politiâ & ſuſtentata & frænata.

ment,

ment, that this ought to be done; and when they found that applications of this kind would not gain their point with the Queen, who, for reaſons that will hereafter be mentioned, was not inclined to favour them, they reſolved to proceed in other methods. They fell into all the popular ways they could contrive to recommend their own ſcheme of worſhip and diſcipline, and make the liturgy and government of the church eſtabliſhed, odious in the nation. Particularly, they treated the biſhops and clergy with groſsly indecent and opprobrious language. In the year 1566, they actually ſeparated from the church, they ſoon after put their own diſcipline into practice in thoſe parts of the kingdom where their influence was the greateſt, and in ſome of their writings gave out open menaces againſt the civil government itſelf, if it would not comply and eſtabliſh their ſcheme. Theſe factious proceedings were the true reaſons, as that wiſe and good ſtateſman Sir Francis Walſingham obſerves, why Queen Elizabeth altered her conduct towards them, and uſed greater ſeverity than ſhe had done before. She ſaw that neither her legal prerogative, nor the peace of the kingdom could be preſerved, unleſs their turbulent ſpirit was reſtrained: and ſhe was therefore obliged to practiſe ſome rigours, which at firſt were no part of her intention.

The ſame reaſons determined King James the Firſt and King Charles the Firſt, to imitate her conduct. But the wrong meaſures of thoſe two princes, as to civil government, having given the Puritans who oppoſed the court, the advantage of becoming popular, and appearing to contend for the liberties of the nation, their party encreaſed ſo much in that parliament of 1641, that at length, by a courſe of meaſures ſometimes very artful, and at other times tumultuous, they obtained what they had been ſo long endeavouring, the abolition of the prelacy, worſhip, and diſcipline of the church of England, and the exaltation of their own Preſbyterian ſcheme in their room. And how did they uſe their power when they had it? Did they ſuffer the clergy to retain their benefices and preferments? Or did they al-

low any congregations or private perſons a liberty to worſhip God according to the ſervice of the church of England? On the contrary, beſides the attempts they made, by methods of iniquity, to blaſt the reputation of many of the clergy, they required them all to take that ſolemn league and covenant, with which they knew that the faithful ſons of the church of England could not comply; and thoſe who refuſed it they not only threw out of all their preferments, but generally ſequeſtered their temporal eſtates, if they had any ſuch, and on every the leaſt pretence, found means, by the civil or military power, to harraſs and oppreſs them. In like manner the gentry, and others of the laity, beſides the great hardſhips many of them ſuffered in their temporal concerns, were all prohibited to uſe, or cauſe to be uſed, even in private, the liturgy of the church of England. In caſe they did ſo, they forfeited for the firſt offence, five pounds; for the ſecond, ten pounds; and for the third, were to ſuffer a year's impriſonment. Such rigours of different kinds were continued, till the body of the nation, unable to bear them any longer, moſt gladly reſtored King Charles the Second, with whom the church of England recovered her rights.

At this time, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that the ſpirits of the diſſenters were much leſs violent than before; and we are therefore not to wonder, if they were ſomewhat inclined to an accommodation with the church of England. And yet there was a remarkable incident in the conference held for that purpoſe in the Savoy, which ſhews what a diſpoſition they ſtill were in, with regard to this church. The commiſſioners on her part deſired them to propoſe what amendments they thought neceſſary to be made in the Book of Common Prayer. This ſervice had been at firſt compoſed in the reign of Edward the Sixth, by the united labours of a number of the moſt eminent divines, of whom ſome, in the following reign, were martyrs, and others were confeſſors in exile for the ſake of their religion. After ſeveral reviews, it had been approved by the higheſt authority in the nation at home, and by Proteſtants of eminent cha-

racter abroad [H]. However, in compliance with the ſcruples of the Preſbyterians, the commiſſioners were diſpoſed to hear and examine the alterations they ſhould offer: but inſtead of propoſing any particulars, they thought fit to throw aſide the whole liturgy at once, as hardly poſſible to be corrected [I] or rendered uſeful, and gave in a new one drawn up entirely by Mr. Baxter. There needs no great penetration to diſcover from what ſpirit ſuch a piece of behaviour flowed, and how it might probably exert itſelf at more favourable opportunities. And can we then wonder, that the church was ſomewhat afraid to lay herſelf open to men of that character, by taking them into her eſtabliſhment? Indeed, the Preſbyterians were the leſs ſolicitous about being received, becauſe they were encouraged by promiſes from the court that they ſhould be taken care of, and have favour ſhewed them, if they continued in a body, and formed an intereſt ſeparate from the church. The deſign of the court in applying thus to them, was really, that by keeping them up, as a ſet of people who were likely to be tolerated, they might gain at the ſame time a toleration for the Papiſts, about whom the king

[H] The celebrated Grotius, in a letter to his brother dated April 8, 1645, ſays, "That the Engliſh liturgy was always accounted the beſt by learned men." See Le Clerc's edition of Grotius on the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, tranſlated by Dr. John Clarke, page 331, where there are ſeveral proofs of the great reſpect which Grotius had for the church of England.

The learned Spanheim, writing to Archbiſhop Uſher from Geneva, in 1638, ſays, "I often call to mind that pleaſing face of "things in your church; that reverence in the public worſhip of "God,—that attention and fervour of your countrymen in the "ſervice of God,—the like to which you will hardly find elſewhere" Epiſt. Ded. part 3, Dub. Evang.

Mr. Gaches, whom Dr. Calamy, in his abridgment of Mr. Baxter's Life, page 568, ſtiles a famous preacher at Charenton, ſpeaking of the liturgy of the church of England, ſays, "I have read "it a long time ago, and was wonderfully edified by it." Durel of the Government and Worſhip of the Reformed Churches, Lond. 1662, page 66. In which book are many other teſtimonies of foreign divines to the ſame purpoſe.

[I] Mr. Pierce, in his Vindication of the Diſſenters, 2d edition, Lond. 1718, page 225, ſays, "That the very form of the Engliſh "liturgy was diſliked by the miniſters, and they thought it much "eaſier to draw up a new one, than to mend the old one."

and the duke of York were heartily concerned. Whether the Preſbyterians in general ſuſpected this deſign, I will not poſitively affirm, though ſome of them have not ſcrupled to acknowledge it[K]. But there is ground, at leaſt, to think that their views of being ſupported, and continuing ſeparate from the church, were much more agreeable to the chiefs of the diſſenters, than the making any conſiderable advances on their part, in order to be taken into her communion.

This appears by their conduct, with regard to the endeavours uſed not long afterwards by ſome perſons of eminence and diſtinguiſhed moderation in our church to bring them into it. In 1668, lord-keeper Bridgman, lord-chief-juſtice Hale, and two or three divines at their requeſt, had conferences for this purpoſe with ſome leading Preſbyterians; but found them ſo backward to make any reaſonable advances, or adhere to thoſe that they ſeemed to make, that they grew weary of treating with them. Dr. Calamy in his letter to archdeacon Echard, p. 75, ſeems unwilling to believe the truth of an account given to this purpoſe in his hiſtory of England, vol. iii. p. 237, but he does not venture to contradict it, and his caution was juſt; for it might have been ſupported by a poſitive declaration made by Dr. Burton [L], who had been chaplain to the lord-keeper, and was one of the perſons employed by him in this negotiation. And this may be thought very probable to have been the real diſpoſition of the Preſbyterians at that time, if we conſider the account which Dr. Calamy himſelf has given of them, in his abridgment of the life of Baxter, p. 598, where he ſays, that about

[K] Mr. Pierce, in his Vindication of the Diſſenters, page 228, ſays, "That the deſpiſed Preſbyterians were not ſo ſtupid, as not "plainly to perceive at what King Charles was driving." If this was true, is it not very ſtrange they ſhould cultivate an intereſt at court, ſo much as even Dr. Calamy allows they did? Who in his letter to Archdeacon Echard, Lond. 1718, page 71, hath theſe words, "That the Preſbyterian miniſters, both then and after-"wards, depended on a court-intereſt more than they had any juſt "ground for, I believe to be very true."

[L] See a Vindication of the Rights of Eccleſiaſtical Authority by William Sherlock, D. D. Lond. 1685, page 188.

the

the year, " ſo ill a ſpirit was got among ſome of them, " who but juſt before were in a ſuffering condition, " that many were much offended at Mr. Baxter's " preaching for union, and againſt diviſion, or unneceſ- " ſary withdrawing from each other, and unwarrantable " narrowing of the church of Chriſt." We ſee that the diſſenters could hardly bear with even thoſe among themſelves, who were for counſels of peace, and endeavoured to make them leſs averſe to the church of England: from whence we may conclude, that they were in no fit temper for a treaty with her. " Accordingly, in " the year 1681, when a bill of comprehenſion was of- " fered by the Epiſcopal party in the Houſe of Com- " mons, by which the Preſbyterians would have been " taken into the church," we are told by a writer of thoſe times, " that, to the amazement of all people, " their party did not ſeem concerned to promote it; on " the contrary, they neglected it. And that this increaſed " the jealouſy, as if they hoped they were ſo near car- " rying all before them, that they deſpiſed a compre- " henſion."

The truth is, the diſſenters were, about this time, much exalted in their hopes, by obſerving what a change had happened in the temper of the nation, to the diſadvantage of the biſhops and the clergy. The biſhops had made themſelves very unpopular, by adhering to the court in ſome points of importance then in agitation; which though they might do with a good conſcience, as thinking the meaſures of the other party were too violent and dangerous, to be for the true intereſt of the nation, yet ſo great was the ferment which had been raiſed by the Popiſh plot, that many were highly offended with them, and with the clergy in general, for acting as they did, and not falling into the warmeſt meaſures of oppoſition to the court. Not a few, even of the church, were alienated from them in their affections on that account. And of this the diſſenters were ſo much diſpoſed to make an advantage, that, as we are informed by the hiſtorian laſt mentioned [M], who was

[M] Burnet's Hiſt. of his own Times, vol. i. p. 461.

never

never violent againſt them, "they behaved themſelves "very indecently: for though, ſays he, many of the "moſt moderate clergy were trying if advantage might "be taken, from the ill ſtate we were in, to heal thoſe "breaches that were among us, they, on their part, fell "ſeverely upon the body of the clergy." And preſently afterwards he adds, "that the preſs being open "became very licentious, both againſt the court and "the clergy. And in this the non-conformiſt had ſo "great a hand, that the biſhops and clergy apprehend-"ing that a rebellion, and with it the pulling the church "to pieces, was deſigned, ſet themſelves, on the other "hand, to write againſt the late times, and to draw a "parallel between the preſent times and them." He is ſo impartial, indeed, as to acknowledge that this parallel was not decently enough managed by thoſe who undertook the argument on the behalf of the clergy; he means, I ſuppoſe, that the writers on that ſide reproached the diſſenters too ſeverely with their former treatment of the crown and the church: but, as occaſion was given to theſe reproaches by freſh provocations of the ſame kind, we cannot think it ſtrange, that they were made with ſome ſeverity. But, however that might be, the reader will perceive that this conduct, on the part of the diſſenters, did not look like a deſign of ever coming into the church, but rather, of purſuing the ſame courſe they had taken before, to ruin her eſtabliſhment, and raiſe one of their own in its ſtead.

And to this, it is probable, they might not be a little encouraged by what they ſaw done at that time in Scotland. About the year 1670 [N], biſhop Leighton, and others of moderate principles in that church, wherein epiſcopacy was then the eſtabliſhed government, had been endeavouring earneſtly to promote an accommodation between the church and the Preſbyterian party. To which end, they were willing to deſiſt from ſome points of ſuperiority and juriſdiction over the clergy, which had been always claimed as the certain rights of the Epiſcopal order, and were really warranted by the practice

[N] Burnet's Hiſt. of his own Times, vol. i. p. 290, 97.

of

of the church in its three firſt ages. Biſhop Leighton entreated the Preſbyterians, that conſidering the unhappy effects of ſchiſm, and the moderation of the church in making ſuch advances, they would not be wanting on their part to accept theſe terms, which they might do with honour, as well as juſtice, and ſo reſtore an union exceedingly neceſſary for the intereſt of religion. But they were quite unmoved by all that he could ſay. They hoped, that by keeping their own party united, they ſhould, at ſome time or other, oblige the civil government to come in with them. So, inſtead of making any ſteps on their ſide towards an agreement, they endeavoured to keep up the ſpirits of their people, in expectation that, at a proper juncture, they might work their way over the head of the church. And indeed, at the revolution in 1688, this happened as they expected. By their falling in with it, while the Scotiſh biſhops and many of the clergy ſtood out againſt it, King William was induced to the abolition of Epiſcopal government, and the eſtabliſhment of the Preſbyterian in that kingdom. And when the gentlemen of this perſuaſion had once the power in their hands, they treated the poor epiſcopal clergy in the like, and even a worſe manner, than they had before been uſed in England, when the Preſbyterians prevailed there. Biſhop Burnet tells us [o], "that in the weſt of Scotland they generally "broke in upon the epiſcopal clergy with great inſo-"lence, and much cruelty: they carried them about the "pariſhes in a mock proceſſion: they tore their gowns, "and drove them from their churches and houſes: nor "did they treat thoſe of them who had appeared very "zealouſly againſt Popery, with any diſtinction." And whoever will read five tracts written at that time, concerning the ſtate of the Epiſcopal clergy, and an anſwer to them by Mr. Rule, may from them, and even from ſome conceſſions made by the latter, find reaſon to think that biſhop Burnet did not exceed the truth in his account.

[o] Hiſt. of his own Times, vol. i. p. 805.

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In the other kingdoms, the revolution did not produce ſo great effects to the advantage of the diſſenters. But as the ſucceſs of their friends in Scotland, and the hopes they themſelves entertained from king William, gave them high ſpirits, ſo where-ever they had any opportunity, they ſhewed ſufficiently what they would be at, if they had power in their hands. In ſome parts of Ireland, the Preſbyterians, being very numerous, uſed their wealth and intereſt as far as they could, to bear hard upon their neighbours of the eſtabliſhed church, in the way of trade, and in other reſpects, that ſo they might be obliged, for their own ſecurity, to leave her communion. Of this the biſhop of Derry, in his ſecond admonition to the diſſenters of his dioceſe [P], publickly complained. "Some of your teachers, ſays he, p. 120, "ſeem to be of as perſecuting a ſpirit as the Papiſts, "and have ſo far influenced the moſt zealous of their "hearers, that they already perſecute, as far as they "have power, thoſe that diſſent from them; inſomuch, "that, as I obſerved before, ſome that are heartily "deſirous to come to church, dare not, for fear of be-"ing undone by their neighbours." And that this account was not aggravated, but that theſe oppreſſions were continued, has appeared ſince very plainly, by a repreſentation from the houſe of lords of Ireland to queen Ann, of which the ſubſtance was as follows: that the diſſenters had oppoſed and perſecuted the conformiſts, in thoſe parts where their power prevailed, had invaded their congregations, and propagated their ſchiſm in places where it had not the leaſt footing formerly;—that they refuſed to take conforming apprentices, and confined trade among themſelves, excluſive of the conformiſts; that in their illegal aſſemblies, they had proſecuted and cenſured their people for being married according to law; that they had thrown public and ſcandalous reflections upon the epiſcopal order, and upon our laws, particularly the ſacramental teſt; and had miſapplied the royal bounty of 1200l. per ann. in propagating the ſchiſm, and undermining the church;

[P] Dated March 13, 1695, and printed at London, 1696.

and

and had executed an illegal juriſdiction in their preſbyteries and ſynods, &c. We ſee here what a ſpirit they ſhewed, and what uſe they made of their power, as far as it would go.

They had leſs encouragement to do any thing of this kind in England, becauſe the body of the nation was heartily diſpoſed to ſupport the church. But the diſſenters, preſuming, more perhaps than they had reaſon, upon their intereſt in king William, and hoping that the weight of the court might go far in their behalf, did ſoon make ſome public ſteps which ſhewed what their views were even in this kingdom. Sir Humphry Edwin, who was lord-mayor of London in 1698, thought fit to go, with the enſigns of his magiſtracy, to a diſſenting meeting. When this was complained of, by ſome writers on the ſide of the church, the diſſenters anſwered in ſuch a manner as ſhewed plainly how far they carried their pretenſions. One who wrote on their behalf, ſome time after this affair, was Mr. James Pierce, whom I quote the rather, becauſe he declares in the preface of his book [q], that it had given good ſatisfaction univerſally to his brethren, when it was publiſhed in Latin, and that it was the general opinion of his friends, that the putting it into Engliſh might be of ſervice: So that this author may be juſtly conſidered as one who may let us know the general diſpoſition of the diſſenters towards the church of England. Now he, ſpeaking of this action of Sir Humphry Edwin, p. 276, of the firſt part of his Vindication, has theſe words: "If the laws permit the "lord-mayor to frequent our aſſemblies, why might not "he carry thoſe enſigns of his magiſtracy with him?— "One would think the church looks upon thoſe fine "things as her property, or ſuppoſes they have been "hallowed by ſome biſhop, and ſo were profaned by "being carried into any place of worſhip not firſt con-"ſecrated by one of that order." This gentleman muſt have known, that the church of England does not look upon thoſe enſigns of magiſtracy as hallowed, nor pretends any other claim to them, than as ſhe is the church

[q] A Vindication of the Diſſenters, &c.

eſtabliſhed by law; which may juſtly entitle her to ſome degrees of reſpect, not claimable by diſſenting congregations, which are only tolerated. But this reaſon, it ſeems, was not thought of any weight by our author; for in p. 278, he affirms, that the "religion of the "diſſenters is as truly eſtabliſhed as that of the church "of England." And again in the ſame place, "I "acknowledge, ſays he, that the church of England "was formerly the only religion eſtabliſhed by law; "but when the old ſevere laws againſt us were repealed, "and a new one was enacted, that left every one to his "own judgment in the choice of his religion; how can "our religion be ſaid not to be eſtabliſhed?" And he is not contented to have raiſed their ſect into an eſtabliſhment, and thereby into a competition with the church of England, but he goes on to inſult thoſe of her communion, who might be uneaſy on that account. "Oh "men of Iſrael! ſays he, come in from all quarters, "and help the diſtreſſed, whoſe ſorrowful caſe is, ſince "the firſt ſtarting of the controverſy, become much "worſe; for, ever ſince the two kingdoms were united, "the Preſbyterian has been an eſtabliſhed and national "religion in Great-Britain, in the ſame ſenſe in which "the Epiſcopal one is ſo; nay, in ſome ſenſe it is more "eſtabliſhed than the Epiſcopal, in as much as the "Epiſcopal may be altered by parliament, whereas the "Preſbyterian in Scotland cannot, according to the "articles of the Union." And not thinking it enough to ſay that our eſtabliſhment may be altered, he in other places makes no ſcruple to declare that it ought to be altered. "The generality of the Engliſh Preſbyterians, "ſays he, p. 204, as far as I can judge, don't differ "much from them (the Preſbyterians who took the "covenant in 1643,) wiſhing the preſent very corrupt "form of prelacy were aboliſhed, and the true antient "epiſcopacy were reſtored." And unleſs this and ſome other things be done, he declares againſt any union or accommodation with the church of England. "Let "all our brethren, ſays he, p. 285, through the whole "world be judges, whether we have not good reaſon "utterly to forſake the tenets of theſe men, and keep

"at

" at the greateſt diſtance from their communion." After which he adds in the ſame page, the following words: " We have all along deſired peace, and will ſtill " moſt cheerfully embrace it, as ſoon as the unrighteous " conditions which now obſtruct it are removed. But " if no alteration can be made in the terms, there is an " end of all hope of [R] peace and concord."

Mr. Pierce here declares that the notions of the Preſbyterians now, are the ſame with thoſe of their predeceſſors in 1643: and indeed, if we were not ſufficiently informed of it, by one who was ſo well acquainted with the general ſentiments of their party, we might have reaſon to think ſo, from obſerving what pains have been lately taken by ſeveral of our chief diſſenters, to write the lives, and celebrate the memories of ſome of the noted men in thoſe times. Dr. Calamy has done this remarkably, in his abridgment of the life of Mr. Baxter, and in others of his works, in which he extols not only Mr. Baxter, but many more of the non-conformiſts, as ſo venerable for their piety and other good qualities, that they were men of whom the world was not worthy. The like encomiums have been made upon Dr. Manton, who preached at Cromwell's inauguration, and recommended his highneſs to the bleſſing of God; upon Dr. Owen, who was a particular favourite of the protector's; and upon divers other worthies of that age. And lately Mr. Neal has publiſhed a work to vindicate and adorn the characters of thoſe more antient Puritans, who made the firſt diſturbances in the church in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and of thoſe who continued them down from that time to the great rebellion.

Now what can with reaſon be concluded from all theſe proceedings, but that the diſſenters of the preſent age have much the ſame principles and diſpoſitions to-

[R] This free declaration of our author puts me in mind of what was ſaid by the excellent Grotius, about Mr. Calvin the great founder of the Preſbyterian ſect, tom. iv. p. 739. " If we follow " Calvin, there will be no peace, unleſs all go over to the doctrines, " the rites, and the ſtiffneſs of the people of Geneva."—Rivet, Apol. Diſcuſſ. inter Grot. Oper.

wards the church, with thoſe their ſo greatly admired predeceſſors; and would, in a proper conjuncture of affairs, be likely to take the ſame meaſures againſt her? The only material and avowed change of principles, that I can find to have been among them, ſeems to be with regard to the toleration of thoſe whom they think to be erroneous in religion: in that point, indeed, they no longer adhere to the rigid notions of the ancient ſectaries. They have made ſome public and full declarations for general liberty of judgment and profeſſion, for mutual forbearance and Chriſtian benevolence. But are theſe declarations to be underſtood as importing ſecurity to the church of England in her preſent ſtate, ſuppoſing that they had power ſufficient to alter it? Not at all. Mr. Pierce [s] in his anſwer to Dean Sherlock, no longer ago than the year 1718, very frankly acquaints us, if we think ſo, we are much miſtaken. The Dean, ſays he, aſks, "Have any of the diſſenters declared "that they are for maintaining the church as by law "eſtabliſhed?" To which he anſwers, "It would be "very ſtrange if they ſhould. Can they diſlike ſo many "things as they do in the church, and yet be againſt "altering them?" From whence it is plain, that before this gentleman, and thoſe of his mind, would be content that our eſtabliſhment ſhould be maintained, there are many things to be altered in it.

And much to the like purpoſe, we have yet more lately the ſentiments of another writer on the ſame ſide; who, after he has obſerved, in decent expreſſions, "That "the church of England hath already devoured many a "rich morſel; that ſurely it muſt be an unconſcionable "ſtomach that can be contented with nothing leſs than "the whole; and that this may occaſion a dangerous "ſurfeit;" proceeds to aſſure us, "That the diſſenters "are abſolutely content, till her arms are opened a little "wider, to leave her in poſſeſſion of every emolument "belonging to her as mother church." It is certainly

[s] Some reflections upon Dean Sherlock's Vindication of the Corporation and Teſt-acts, by James Pierce, Lond. 1718, p. 29.

kind

kind in the diſſenters to leave the church, for any time at all, in quiet poſſeſſion of what ſhe has. But how much wider muſt her arms be opened in order to receive them? The meaſure of latitude neceſſary to this end, is not quite proper to be mentioned at preſent. The only farther explanation he gives of this point, is in p. 30, where, having told us, "that the body of the diſſenters "are friends to an eſtabliſhment, and would be ſo even "to our eſtabliſhment, provided our foundations were "a little larger, and ſome proper alterations were "made," he adds, for our comfort, "that theſe altera-"tions would not in the leaſt leſſen the honour or reve-"nues of the church, or render the eſtabliſhment of it "in the leaſt more precarious or feeble." From whence we may collect, that the temporalities of the church being to remain as they are, her doctrine, or her polity, or both, are to be affected by theſe alterations. Probably her articles muſt be reformed, and her methods of ordination, inſtitution, and juriſdiction muſt be changed, to ſatisfy this author and his adherents. But has he the conſciences of the diſſenters at his diſpoſal? does he know that all, or a majority, or any conſiderable part of them, will be ſatisfied with his ſcheme of alterations? Have the deputies from their ſeveral meetings entirely agreed among themſelves what alterations they would have? I hardly believe they have gone ſo far yet, or will do it very ſoon. But ſuppoſe this was done; are the governors and members of the church of England to have no ſatisfaction given to them that theſe alterations are right to be made? Might not ſome of them be repugnant or diſparaging to doctrines which they eſteem very important truths? Might not others break in upon antient conſtitutions, which they think of apoſtolical, or divine authority, and therefore not to be given up to any demands? I believe there would be at leaſt as many in this church, and among them perſons of eminent character for piety and learning, who would take offence at ſuch alterations, as there would be of the diſſenters well ſatisfied with them. And what then would the church be really the better for opening her arms to receive theſe new friends? or how would their admiſſion

conduce

conduce to the maintenance of harmony and peace among her members? One effect of it indeed would be, that a number of perſons of this author's principles might get into the eſtabliſhment, and partake of thoſe honours and revenues for which they expreſs ſo kind a concern. But would the eſtabliſhment be ever the firmer, or ever the more uſeful to the ſtate on this account? Let any one conſider what was the caſe of the church eſtabliſhed in 1641, when ſo many perſons diſaffected to her polity were within her arms. Did they not make uſe of their ſituation to diſtreſs their equals, and pull down their ſuperiors? did they not preſume to diſturb and new model the whole conſtitution of the church? and did not their attempts and ſucceſs in this way produce a deplorable ſtate of confuſion? I ſhall hereafter have occaſion to mention ſomewhat of this kind: in the mean time, I think, that, from what has been ſaid, and the paſſages cited from diſſenting writers of late, as well as of former times; we may juſtly conclude, that they are not diſpoſed to ſuffer the eſtabliſhment of our church to continue as it is; but would, if they had power, forthwith make a number of ſuch alterations as they think proper. Which is in effect, the ſame as to ſay, that indeed they deſire there ſhould be an eſtabliſhment with honours and revenues; but that theſe ſhould be annexed to ſuch doctrines, and ſuch a polity only as they approve: and until this be done, they will never be quiet, but will always be endeavouring to bring it to paſs.

We might indeed, as I obſerved above, have had ſome reaſon to conclude this, if we only conſidered the general inclinations of mankind to promote and propagate their own opinions in religion, and to obtain as great a ſhare as they can of ſecular advantages along with them: but when, to this ground of judgment, is added the experience we have had, in ſuch a courſe of years, of the ſpirit and temper of the diſſenters towards the church; and moreover, the ſigns they give even now of the continuance of the ſame diſpoſitions, by celebrating the memories of their predeceſſors in the ſeparation, and avowing moſt of their tenets; we have, I think, in theſe circumſtances, as much evidence as

can

can well be expected in a matter of this nature, and ſuch as may juſtify our acting, as there may be occaſion, upon it. This then is the firſt thing I propoſed to ſhew, to wit, That the body of the diſſenters would deſire the ſubverſion of the preſent eſtabliſhment of the church of England, if they had power to effect it.

The ſecond thing I advance, is, That by a capacity of public offices without any reſtraint, the diſſenters in a ſhort time would come to have ſo much power as would be ſufficient at leaſt to endanger this eſtabliſhment, if not, in the end, to effect its ſubverſion. And this will be likewiſe evident, if we conſider the whole body of thoſe diſſenters, who, if any of them have a right to a capacity of offices without a religious teſt, muſt all be allowed to have the ſame right. Thoſe who have been the moſt forward of late to put in their claim to this right, are the Preſbyterians, Independants, and Anabaptiſts: but there are many others who may, with as much reaſon as theſe, expect to be conſidered and treated as good ſubjects of the ſtate.

In the firſt place, this may truly be affirmed of the Quakers. They have, for many years paſt, not only practiſed a quiet ſubmiſſion to the civil government, but have profeſſed a true loyalty and affection to it. And there is the more reaſon to give credit to them in this point, becauſe their intereſt is productive of theſe diſpoſitions; and becauſe the genius and manners of their ſect, averſe to every thing of military practice, do, in ſome meaſure, diſable them to be dangerous, by open diſturbance, to the public peace. This body of men, therefore, has a right, as good ſubjects, to all the ſame privileges as other Proteſtant Diſſenters; and particularly to a like unreſtrained capacity of offices in the ſtate.

Another conſiderable ſet of Proteſtants who differ from the church of England, are the Arians, Socinians, and others, by whatever name they be called, who are heterodox with regard to the ſacred Trinity. The number of theſe is not a little increaſed of late years. Men are pleaſed to have all points of religion brought within the compaſs of their reaſon, and cannot eaſily digeſt thoſe acknowledgments, which in the orthodox ſcheme

are neceſſary to be made, of the weakneſs and defectiveneſs of human underſtanding: on which account it is not very improbable, but theſe Anti-trinitarians may in length of time gain numerous converts; and when they have done ſo, may reſume the deſign they have formerly had of holding ſeparate aſſemblies for divine worſhip; that they may not be obliged to join in forms which they think diſhonourable to the one ſupreme God. But whatever the increaſe of their numbers may be, there is reaſon to think that they will be as quiet and well-affected ſubjects to the civil government as the other Proteſtant Diſſenters are. For none of their tenets are of ſuch a nature as will incline them to diſpute the rightfulneſs of the preſent civil ſettlement, or put them upon any attempts to diſturb it. A man who believes that the eternal Father of all things cannot have any equal, and that therefore the word God is applied to the Son in a lower ſenſe, may, notwithſtanding this opinion, preſerve a due loyalty to the king, and affection to his country: he may have charity for his neighbours, and be diſpoſed to live in peace with them; in a word, he may perform all the ſocial duties as well as another man who is right in his belief. Mr. Neal has declared himſelf as to this matter in very full terms. "An he-"retic, ſays he, or a non-conformiſt to the eſtabliſhed "religion, may be a moſt loyal and dutiful ſubject, "and deſerve the higheſt preferment his prince can "beſtow [r]." I cannot go ſo far as this author in his compliment to heretics; but I think it indeed evident that they may be as peaceable and even loyal ſubjects to a civil government, as the Preſbyterians, or other Proteſtant Diſſenters: and therefore, upon the general principle which theſe latter make the ground of their claim, the Anti-trinitarians, even though they ſhould openly profeſs themſelves ſuch, and ſeparate from the church, yet ought to have an equally free capacity of offices in the ſtate. The reader will ſee that what hath been ſaid concerning theſe is to be applied to all ſorts of Chriſtians, however erroneous they are in re-

[r] Hiſt. of the Puritans, vol. iii. p. 312.

ligion,

ligion, provided they be well-affected to the ſtate. And, perhaps, he may think that others, beſides Chriſtians, have alſo a right to be included in this application; in regard that it is both poſſible and likely that they may be good ſubjects to the civil government. Mr. Chandler has declared [u], "He does not apprehend that the "profeſſion of any particular religion, as it ſtands con-"tradiſtinguiſhed from the law of nature, is, in the na-"ture of things, neceſſary to the ſafety and good order "of government, which may be ſupported by a due "regard to the practice of the moral duties, and by a "proper care in the civil magiſtrate to enforce the ob-"ſervation of them, in all who are ſubject to their au-"thority and government; which will be ſufficiently "ſupported by ſuch a regard to moral duties, notwith-"ſtanding the greateſt diverſity of opinions in other "things, even though the community ſhould conſiſt "of ſome Deiſts, ſome Mahometans, and ſome Chriſ-"tians." In this paſſage, if I underſtand it rightly, the author's meaning ſeems to be, that as perſons of the religions here mentioned acknowledge the being and providence of God, with the moral obligations from thence incumbent upon mankind, they may, by the influence of theſe principles upon them, be loyal ſubjects under any government that is rightly adminiſtered. Now if this be true, then, in purſuance of the general principle, laid down by the diſſenters, in behalf of all ſubjects well affected to the civil government, it muſt follow, that free-born Engliſhmen, although they ſhould openly profeſs themſelves Deiſts, yet ought not to have their civil rights at all abridged on that account, by any teſt or other means, but ought to be allowed to be as freely capable as Chriſtian ſubjects of offices in the ſtate. Which doctrine, if it be good, will probably encourage a number of perſons to offer their ſervice to the public, who cannot conſcientiouſly do it at preſent.

But ſuppoſing this capacity of offices ſhould be reſtrained to Chriſtians only, yet, if we conſider how numerous all the ſectaries or heretics profeſſing this re-

[u] Reflections on the Conduct of Modern Deiſts, &c. Lond. 1727. Pref. page 5.

ligion, are at preſent, or may be hereafter, they will appear to be a body juſtly formidable to the church of England. For though they differ among themſelves in many reſpects, and might be ill enough inclined to each other, in caſe they were competitors for any advantage, yet, while there is nothing of that ſort to ſet them at variance, they will probably agree in being enemies to the eſtabliſhment of the church, and in endeavouring to weaken and ſubvert it: becauſe in its ſubverſion, they may all hope to find their ſeveral advantages in one way or another. If they cannot all expect to gain ſuch an eſtabliſhment for themſelves as the church has at preſent, yet they may all hope to have ſome allowances from the ſtate for their ſeveral teachers, according to a ſcheme that is ſaid to be formed by ſome of their friends: or, if this point ſhould prove too hard to be gained, they may, at leaſt, hope to be relieved from that unjuſt burthen, as the Quakers and many others account it, of paying to an eſtabliſhed miniſtry, and may reaſonably expect to increaſe very much their ſeveral ſects, when there ſhall not be a regular body to oppoſe them. Theſe, and other motives of the like nature, did, in fact, engage the different ſectaries in 1641, to act in cloſe concert and union together for demoliſhing the church of England. Not only the Preſbyterians, who hoped to be eſtabliſhed in the room of the church, but the Independents and the Anabaptiſts, the Enthuſiaſts who were for the fifth monarchy, and others of that turn, who knew not what they were for, yet all heartily agreed "in declaring before God with up-lifted "hands, that they would extirpate the epiſcopal govern-"ment by archbiſhops, biſhops, deans, and chapters, "and all the officers dependant upon them;" which accordingly, by their joint aſſiſtance, was brought to paſs.

Then indeed, after a little time, theſe ſects began to quarrel among themſelves; and the Preſbyterians, who came neareſt to obtain an eſtabliſhment, moſt bitterly reproached the Independents, the Anabaptiſts, and other ſectaries, with their ſchiſm, their ill principles, and their hypocriſy, as what produced inſupportable diſorders. Mr. Edwards, an eminent Preſbyterian, made and publiſhed

liſhed a collection of examples to this purpoſe, and added his own cenſure of the perſons concerned, in the following terms: "there never was a more hypocritical, "falſe, diſſembling, cunning generation in England, "than many of the grandees of our ſectaries.——They "encourage, protect, and cry up for ſaints, ſons of Be-"lial, and the vileſt of men." Edwards's Gangræna, part iii. p. 240. And again, p. 87. "Yea, ſays he, "when for their ſeditious, tumultuous, libellous, ſcoff-"ing, wicked, lying, ſcandalous reports, books, and "practices, they have been queſtioned, there is nothing "in their mouths but perſecution." Mr. Neal has thought fit in his third vol. of the hiſtory of Puritans, p. 370, to ſpeak ſlightly of this author, "and of our "church writers, for reporting the ſtate of religion in "thoſe times from his Writings." Let us then have recourſe to the noted Mr. Baxter, whom Mr. Neal often quotes, and with great approbation. "Did we "ever think, ſays Mr. Baxter, when we were reproached "by the enemies as having our party compoſed of "Anabaptiſts and Separatiſts, that ſo many of them "would have proved ſo much worſe?——Is it this that "our eyes muſt behold inſtead of our ſo much deſired "and hoped for reformation? Oh, what heart is ſo "hard in any true Chriſtian's breaſt, that doth not rend "and relent to think of the doleful caſe of England! "How many thouſand profeſſors of religion are quite "ruined in their ſouls, and turned into monſters rather "than ſaints!" And in the ſame book, p. 147, "What "ſhall I tell you, ſays he, of all thoſe hideous pamphlets "againſt ordinances, and for the mortality of the ſoul, "and that the ſoul is God himſelf, and againſt the "truth of the ſcripture, and downright familiſm, and "libertiniſm, and Paganiſm!—I cannot but think how "men cried out againſt Mr. Edwards his Gangræna, "at firſt, as if he had ſpoken nothing but lies, and "now they have juſtified it with a fearful overplus." Such was the language of the Preſbyterians concerning the ſectaries of thoſe times.

On the other hand, they were not wanting to reproach the Preſbyterians with equal bitterneſs. The Indepen-

dants ſay, "The national covenant is a double-faced "covenant, the greateſt make-bate and ſnare, that ever "the devil, and the clergy his agents, caſt in among "honeſt men in our age." Edwards's Gangr. part iii. p. 220. "The Preſbyterian government is anti-chriſ-"tian, lordly, tyrannical, cruel, a worſe bondage than "under prelates, a bondage under taſk-maſters, as the "Iſraelites in Egypt." Gangr. part iii. p. 221. "The "aſſembly is anti-chriſtian, Romiſh, bloody, the plagues "and peſts of the kingdom." Gangr. part iii. p. 230. After ſo much diſcord, one would have hardly thought it poſſible for them to have united any more: but, upon the Reſtoration, all theſe differences were ſoon forgotten, and they acted amicably in concert again, to carry on their work of oppoſing the church of England: they do ſo at preſent, and while they have ſuch an adverſary before them, it is probable they always will.

And theſe their united efforts againſt the church will be likely to have the greater ſucceſs, in regard that the diſſenters may gain ſuch an intereſt in the corporate and other burghs, which ſend members to the parliament, as may give them a weight in the legiſlature, much more than in ſtrict proportion to their numbers and their wealth. Both theſe indeed, according to their own accounts, are very conſiderable. A late writer on their ſide ſays, "The number of the Proteſtant Diſſenters," (by whom he ſeems to mean only the diſſenters of the three denominations) "is at the loweſt calculation much "above 700,000, and their wealth in land, &c. amounts "to near fifteen millions." I fancy this perſon uſed multiplying glaſſes in his computation of their ſtrength: but whatever it be, it is undoubtedly a circumſtance of great advantage, towards the exerting it with effect, which another of their writers has obſerved, and, I believe, with truth, to wit, "That the diſſenters being for "the moſt part engaged in the trade of the kingdom, "both as merchants and manufacturers, muſt neceſſa-"rily create a great dependence upon them." The ſame quantity of wealth engaged in trade, is, without all queſtion, much more powerful than when veſted in land; both becauſe of the more frequent returns of it

into the hands of the proprietors, and of the many opportunities it affords of ſetting people to work, aſſiſting lower tradeſmen with goods upon credit, and taking off their manufactures. On theſe accounts the diſſenters have certainly a great advantage towards forming an intereſt in the boroughs, of which many conſiſt chiefly of men in buſineſs, who may be eaſily laid under obligations by the means I have mentioned. To trade moſtly with them, as the diſſenters are known to do one with another, and to give them credit a good while in their dealings, may ſometimes be equivalent to no ſmall ſum of ready money, and yet may be done with eaſe by thoſe who have large ſums always paſſing through their hands. They may therefore gain a number of perſons in the magiſtracy or government of corporations, and by degrees may introduce their own friends into thoſe poſts. And it is well known, that by being in the government of corporations, by having the diſpoſal of their revenues, which in ſome of them are very conſiderable, by conferring their offices of truſt and profit, with their other franchiſes and privileges, a very great intereſt may be formed towards getting members into parliament. This intereſt may be of no ſmall weight, even in elections for ſome of the counties; but in many boroughs it is ſo powerful, that hardly any other natural intereſt of country gentlemen can pretend to equal it.

Indeed, it is well known how much the intereſt, which the gentry had in the boroughs, has been diminiſhed within forty years paſt. By their having been under the conſtant burden of a heavy land-tax all the laſt war, their eſtates are greatly impaired and encumbered; ſo that they have not been able to ſpend ſo much money as has been neceſſary for elections againſt thoſe, who paying little or nothing to the public, and getting vaſt eſtates by the funds, or by trade, have been in a condition to bear what expences they pleaſed, in order to be in parliament. But the caſe will be ſtill worſe if the diſſenters ſhall be able to bring themſelves into the government of corporations, and thereby turn all the power they derive from thence likewiſe againſt the gentry. In that caſe, how difficult will it be for the lat-

ter

ter to procure themſelves ſeats in the Houſe of Commons? And unleſs they do this, how hard will it be for them to ſucceed in their pretenſions to any places of honour and profit? I believe, indeed, that the crown, and thoſe of its miniſters who underſtand its true intereſt, will always be diſpoſed, if other things are equal, to favour the gentlemen of ancient families, whoſe brave anceſtors have preſerved the conſtitution. It is very hard they ſhould, as in a courſe of years too many of them probably will, ſink down into the duſt, by the continual diſadvantages under which they labour. To ſuffer this, as far as it can be hindered, would be wrong in policy, becauſe the heads and other branches of ancient families, will have ſpirits agreeable to their generous blood, and if they be under perpetual preſſures, the public at length muſt be very much incommoded by it. Whereas, if they be put into offices of truſt and profit, they may from thence not only be made eaſier in their fortunes, but may moſt effectually ſerve the government, by the credit which an ancient and noble family reflects upon the poſt it fills. And they are in number much more than enow to afford a very copious choice of perſons to ſerve the public in thoſe poſts that are fit for them. As on the other hand, for thoſe places that are moſt proper for perſons in the way of trade and buſineſs, there are alſo great numbers of reputable merchants, and others, of the church of England, entirely well-affected to the preſent ſettlement, out of whom the crown may be abundantly ſupplied with proper officers. I believe the miniſters of ſtate, by the numerous applications made to them on ſuch accounts, know this to be true: which, by the way, proves that there is no want of the diſſenters, nor any expediency of employing them on that account.

But whether it be expedient to employ them or not, will any one who knows the preſent ſtate of things imagine that they will not get into places, if by the means abovementioned they can get themſelves into parliament? Let us only ſuppoſe a good number of them in the houſe of commons, and that they prove active, conſtantly attendant, well united, able ſpeakers, and not uneaſy in

their

their private fortunes. What will they not think they have a right to claim? What may they not combine to gain? What may they not ſucceed in? Some perſons who have been for the abolition of the teſt, have profeſſed to think that it could have no other effect than to occaſion the admiſſion of the diſſenters into offices of the inferior kind. I ſuppoſe they meant ſuch offices as a writer for the diſſenters ſpecifies, in ſaying, that "They are as willing and able as any to ſerve in the "commiſſions of taxes, peace, and lieutenancy, in the "bench of aldermen and aſſiſtants." But this ſame writer is by no means contented with poſts of this kind. He puts in his claim to a ſhare of all, even the higheſt in the kingdom: for he adds, "that they are as willing "to ſerve in the judicature, and offices of ſtate, or in "commands at ſea or land." And ſoon after, he intimates "that it would not be to the diſhonour of the "government, to have a diſſenting general, or a diſ"ſenting ſtateſman:" as to which, I doubt not but moſt of his friends are of his opinion. And will it be impoſſible they ſhould gain ſuch poſts? Have we not had examples in our hiſtory, of men of intereſt in parliament, who have raiſed themſelves into offices of that kind, without any real favour from the crown? Was not this the caſe of Mr. St. John, of lord Say, and of others in the reign of Charles the Firſt? Was it not the caſe of the earl of Shafteſbury in the reign of Charles the Second? And has it not been the caſe of many others ſince thoſe times? And whenever the diſſenters ſhould obtain any of the chief poſts, would not the intereſt and ſtrength of their party be proportionably increaſed? Would not they be preferred to all the underplaces of truſt, profit, or influence, in the diſpoſal of their principals? Would they not act with ſo much more dignity and weight? Would not the members, and eſpecially the miniſters, of the eſtabliſhed church, be proportionably diſcountenanced and diſcouraged? And muſt not theſe circumſtances undermine and cut away the ground of our church eſtabliſhment?

It has been repreſented as abſurd to apprehend that the eſtabliſhment of the church of England ſhould ever come

come to be ſubverted by the diſſenters; becauſe this muſt ſuppoſe them to gain the whole legiſlature, the king and the lords, as well as the commons. But the reader will hardly fail to reflect, that the very ſame thing which is now talked of, as ſo impracticable, has been actually done in this kingdom, not a hundred years ago; and done by the power of thoſe diſſenters, who, a ſhort time before, had as little appearance of being able to prevail upon the whole legiſlature, as their ſucceſſors have at preſent. The circumſtances now in favour of the latter, are not indeed quite the ſame as they were then; but they are of great weight, and I believe it will be allowed that the houſe of commons at preſent, is not of leſs moment in the balance of the conſtitution, than it was at the time. Let any man ſuppoſe, that upon the repeal of the Corporation and Teſt-Acts, the diſſenters ſhould gain either a majority, or even a party of conſiderable weight in the houſe of commons; and when we conſider the gentlemen of North Britain, this will not appear to be very unlikely: let him ſuppoſe that the concurrence of this party may be neceſſary to grant ſupplies, when they are more than ordinarily wanted, in times of any public hazard or diſtreſs; that divers of thoſe members who are for the church of England, may be unattentive or diſunited, while the diſſenting party is vigilant, active, and reſolute in puſhing any points to the diſadvantage of the church. Theſe were really the circumſtances in 1641; they may poſſibly, and even not improbably, upon the repeal of the Corporation and Teſt-acts, be the ſame again: and ſuppoſing they ſhould be, will any one ſay that the church eſtabliſhed ſhould be in no danger? I will leave this point without farther enlargement to the impartial reader, who, I doubt not, muſt clearly ſee that in ſuch circumſtances the eſtabliſhment of the church would be made to ſhake to its very foundations; and without ſuch extraordinary aid and ſupport, from the crown, or the houſe of peers, as perhaps it will be difficult for either of them to give, muſt be borne upon, ſink, and at length be overthrown.

Now

Now would ſuch a ſtate of things be for the true intereſt of the nation? Would it be deſirable either to have no eſtabliſhment, or one of a Preſbyterian or Independant form? A late writer, who ſtiled himſelf a member of the houſe of commons, has let us know it is his opinion, that from nature, or the reaſon of things, it is difficult to ſhew that the clergy have any right to be maintained by the laity; or at leaſt he thinks it wrong that any one ſhould be obliged to ſupport a parochial paſtor, whom he never reſorts to; which opinion viſibly allows no right in the magiſtrate to provide, at the general charge of his ſubjects, for their general inſtruction, by perſons whom he appoints; or in other words, repreſents it as unjuſt to make a public eſtabliſhment of any religion. But this gentleman has the misfortune to differ from the wiſeſt and beſt men in every age and country of the world, of whoſe ſentiments and practice we have any account. By ſeriouſly conſidering the general ſtate and diſpoſitions of mankind, they found a neceſſity of having a competent number of perſons, in every nation, peculiarly appointed for the ſtudy and adminiſtrations of religion; that ſo they might be fit to inculcate it on others, and preſerve an influence on the minds of the people, that might anſwer the ends of civil government. One might eaſily ſhew with what care and regard ſuch inſtitutions were made, and kept up, in all the moſt celebrated nations of antiquity; and how much they contributed to the public welfare. But I will not ſpend time in doing this; becauſe the expediency, and even neceſſity of ſuch eſtabliſhments of religion, is a thing ſo evident in itſelf, to thoſe who know mankind, that it has been confeſſed by ſeveral politicians, who were certainly not prejudiced in favour of the clergy of our own, or of any other country. Mr. Harrington [x], Mr. Nevil [y], and even Oliver Cromwell declared their opinions, that there ought to be in every ſtate a national church, or a public leading in religion.

[x] See a Letter on Enthuſiaſm. Characteriſticks, vol. i. p. 17.
[y] Plato Redivivus, &c. Lond. 1681, p. 184.

And if there muſt be ſome eſtabliſhment of religion, it is as certain that one in the epiſcopal way is both more agreeable to the practice of the primitive Chriſtian church, and more ſuitable to the civil conſtitution of this realm, than any Preſbyterian model could be.

Of the former of theſe points one may be eaſily ſatisfied, by conſulting the writings of the fathers, and others, in the three firſt centuries after our Saviour: to which, upon the preſent occaſion, it may be ſufficient to refer thoſe who are deſirous of ſeeing more on this ſubject; but upon the latter I ſhall offer the following obſervations: In this point we have the judgments of ſome of the ableſt ſtateſmen that we have ever had in England. "For the government of biſhops," ſays the famous lord Bacon [z], "for my part, not prejudging "the proceedings of other churches, I do hold it to be "warranted by the word of God, and by the practice "of the ancient church in better times, and much more "convenient for kingdoms, than a parity of miniſters, "and government by ſynods." And again in the ſame tract, "It is not poſſible, ſays he, in reſpect of the "great ſympathy between the ſtate civil and the ſtate "eccleſiaſtical, to make ſo much alteration in the church, "but that it would have a perilous operation on the "kingdom." This great man does not clearly expreſs the reaſons why he thought a Preſbyterian government in the church leſs convenient and ſuitable to the civil ſtate than an epiſcopal one. But Sir Francis Walſingham ſpeaks more plainly in his noted letter to Mr. Critoy. He obſerves, "that the Puritans, in their conſiſtory "and preſbytery, opened to the people ſuch a way to "the government, as was no leſs prejudicial to the "liberty of private perſons, than to the ſovereignty of "the prince."

And this was indeed more fully declared as the ſenſe of Queen Elizabeth, by Sir John Puckering, who was afterwards lord-keeper of the great ſeal, in a ſpeech, by him made, in the houſe of peers, in the 28th year of her reign, of which the following paſſage is a part [A].

[z] Bacon's Works, 1730, vol. 4, p. 436.

[A] See a ſhort View of the late Troubles in England, in the Reign of King Charles I. Oxford, 1681. folio, p. 13.

"You

" You are eſpecially commanded by her majeſty, ſays " he, that no ear be given, or time afforded, to the " wearieſome ſolicitations of thoſe that be called Puritans, " wherewith all the late parliaments have been exceed- " ingly importuned: which ſort of perſons, while that " in the giddineſs of their ſpirits they labour and ſtrive " to advance a new elderſhip, they do but hurt the re- " poſe of the church and commonwealth, which is as " well grounded for the body of religion itſelf, and as " well guided for the diſcipline, as any realm that con- " feſſeth the truth. And the ſame thing is made good " to the world by many of the writings of godly and " learned men, neither anſwered nor anſwerable by " theſe new fangled refiners. Theſe men do both teach " and publiſh in their printed books, and teach in their " conventicles, ſundry opinions, not only dangerous to " a well-ſettled eſtate, and the policy of the realm, by " putting a pike between the clergy and the laity, but " alſo much derogatory to her ſacred majeſty and her " crown; as well as by the diminution of her ancient " and lawful revenues, as by denying her highneſs's " prerogative and ſupremacy, and by offering peril to " her majeſty's ſafety in her own kingdoms." We ſee here what were the ſentiments of that wiſe Queen and her counſel, who will be allowed, I think, to have underſtood at leaſt the civil intereſts of this kingdom.

And much to the ſame purpoſe we have the judgments of ſeveral foreigners, of eminent character, eſpecially for their ſkill in political affairs. I will lay no great ſtreſs upon Mr. de Montmorency, conſtable of France [B], who ſaid, " that if the Calviniſts in that " kingdom ſhould at length obtain the liberty they pre- " tended to, the monarchy would degenerate into a " democracy." For as this miniſter was a papiſt, his ſentiments may on that account have the leſs weight. But the ſame objection does not lie againſt Philip de Mornay: that learned nobleman was not only a Calviniſt, but a principal ſupport of their party in France.

[B] Varillas Hiſtoire de Charles IX. p. 41. Si les Calviniſtes obtenoient en fin la liberté qu'ils pretendoient, la monarchie degeneroit du moins en democratie.

And yet he could not but acknowledge [c], " that " though the Preſbyterian government might do well " enough in popular ſtates, ſuch as Geneva and Switzer- " land, yet, in kingdoms or monarchies, epiſcopal go- " vernment was rather to be choſen." And the ſame opinion in much ſtronger terms, and with a particular view to England, was profeſſed by another foreigner, who underſtood politicks as well as moſt men of his time, and was both a good Proteſtant, and had great candour in matters of religion; I mean the celebrated Pufendorf, who expreſſes himſelf in the following words [D]: " In this reſpect likewiſe not a little blemiſh " is thought to lie upon many of the Calviniſts, as being " too much inclined to affect democracies, and being " on the contrary averſe to monarchies, and forward to " ſubvert them. The cauſe of which is well underſtood " by men of ſkill: for thoſe perſons in France, in " Switzerland, and in the United Provinces, who, in " diſcarding Popery, did at the ſame time throw off " the authority of the Popiſh biſhops, when they ſettled " a new form of government in their church, agreed " upon one of a democratical kind, in which all the " miniſters were upon an equal foot, and for the " management of their church affairs, had elders and " deacons joined with them from amongſt the people.

[c] See Dr. Du Moulin's preface to his father's book concerning the novelty of popery.

[D] Diſſert. Academ. Lond. Scan. 1675. p. 580.

Hac quoque parte non parum labis adhærere multis Calvinianorum judicatur, dum in democratiam nimio amore propendent, & contrà, monarchias averſantur ad eaſque convellendas ſunt proclives. Ejus rei cauſa quidem peritis non obſcura eſt: qui enim per Galliam, Helvetiam, atque Belgium, ſimul cum pontificiâ religione, autoritatem pontificiorum epiſcoporum ejuraverant, cum novam eccleſiæ adminiſtrationem inſtituerant, in democraticam regiminis formam conſenſerunt; in quâ & miniſtri omnes inter ſe eſſent æquales, & ad conventus eccleſiaſticos ſeniores quoque & diaconi è plebe adſciſcerentur. Cum autem ſemel in rebus ſacris plebs ad ſuffragium admitteretur, proximum fuit ut crederent iniquum eſſe totam civitatem Unius Hominis voluntate regi.—Judicant prudentes ad turbas iſtas, quæ ſuperioribus annis Angliam miſerrimè exercuerunt, non parum contuliſſe dogmata Genevenſia, quæ juventus Anglicana ibidem ſtudiis operata aut ex eorum ſcriptis hauſerat & in patriam ſuam diſſeminaverat, &c.

" Now

" Now when they were once admitted to a vote in ec-
" cleſiaſtical matters, the next ſtep was for them to
" have a notion that it was unjuſt that a whole ſtate
" ſhould be governed at the will of one ſingle perſon.
" Men of prudence judge that thoſe troubles, with which
" England was ſome years ago moſt miſerably afflicted,
" were not a little fomented by the Geneva doctrines,
" which the Engliſh youth that ſtudied in that place,
" either learned there, or out of the writings that came
" from thence, and diſperſed thoſe notions into their
" own country."

In this laſt quotation, when Puffendorf ſays that the Calviniſts are too much inclined to democracies, he is not to be underſtood as if he repreſented all of that ſect as being at all times thus diſpoſed: for no doubt, while the kings under whom they live encourage and favour them, they may ſo long be well enough pleaſed with their government, and willing to ſupport it. The baron's meaning I take to have been, that the popular forms of their church-government, have a natural tendency to raiſe diſpoſitions, which, when either they are ſoured by unfavourable treatment, or not enough ſweetened by perſonal intereſt under monarchies, are apt to lean much towards popular ſchemes. And of this tendency, indeed, among the Independents and other ſectaries, the Preſbyterians themſelves in 1645, appear to have been ſenſible: for the London clergy, in a letter written by them in that year from Sion-College, to the aſſembly of divines at Weſtminſter, ſay, " It is much
" to be doubted, leſt the power of the magiſtrate ſhould
" not only be weakened, but utterly overthrown, con-
" ſidering the principles and practices of the Indepen-
" dents, together with their compliance with other ſects,
" ſufficiently known to be anti-magiſtratical." But might not the Independents have retorted this charge upon the Preſbyterians, not only by putting them in mind of the part they had acted againſt the crown for ſeveral years paſt, but alſo by quoting the declared ſentiments of their great leader Mr. Cartwright, who ſays [E], " that the world is now deceived, that think-

[E] Defence of the Admonition, p. 181.

" eth

" eth that the church muſt be framed according to the " common-wealth, and the church-government accord- " ing to the civil government; which is as much as to " ſay, that a man ſhould faſhion his houſe according to " his hangings: whereas indeed it is clean contrary, " that as the hangings are made fit for the houſe, ſo the " commonwealth muſt be made to agree with the " church, and the government thereof with her govern- " ment——Otherwiſe God is made to give place to " men."——Mr. Neal acknowledges [F], that the Puritans did not allow the church to be monarchical. If therefore the government of the ſtate muſt (by divine right, as it ſeems) be ſuited to that of the church, the concluſion is evident, that the government of the ſtate ought not to be monarchical. From this, and other conſiderations, which the paſſages that I have produced may ſuggeſt, the reader, I truſt, will be apprized that an eſtabliſhment of a Preſbyterian form would but ill agree with our civil conſtitution: and from thence he will be farther led to ſee, that in views of policy, it would not be expedient that the vehement part of our diſſenters ſhould be admitted to a full capacity of offices, even ſuppoſing their admiſſion could, at firſt, be gained with tranquillity and ſafety: becauſe their principles and diſpoſitions would be thereby encouraged and ſpread; though not quite ſo much indeed as by an eſtabliſhment, yet certainly more than would be deſirable in the preſent circumſtances of our nation.

But I muſt farther obſerve, as the point upon which this queſtion chiefly turns, that ſuch an admiſſion of all diſſenters to a free capacity of offices, by an abolition of the teſt, will not be likely, in the preſent ſtate of things, to be made, or at leaſt not long followed, with ſuch tranquillity as ſome perſons may imagine: on the contrary, it will be naturally productive of ſuch animoſities, conteſts, and diſorders, as will be very dangerous to the welfare of the nation. How much ſoever the diſſenting intereſt may increaſe by the means abovementioned, yet it will not eaſily come to be equal to that of the church.

[F] Hiſt. Pur. vol. i. p. 133.

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The members of the latter will, for many years, be as they are at preſent, much above the ſectaries in number, as well as in quality and eſtates. It is true, indeed, that all theſe nominal church-men are not to be relied upon for the ſupport of the eſtabliſhment: becauſe infidelity has for ſome years paſt exceedingly increaſed, and, in conſequence of it, a regard for the inſtituted parts of religion, and for the hierarchy in particular, is very much leſſened in the minds of many: the numerous libels publiſhed of late, have had, in ſome meaſure, the effect that was deſigned, of making men ill churchmen, by making them regardleſs of ſeveral doctrines of importance in religion. A late writer [G] on the ſide of the diſſenters, takes notice of this ſtate of things, and does it in a very remarkable way. "The prevailing "opinion of England," ſays he, "is Latitudinarian; "and moſt men in the kingdom are ſo far improved in "their judgments, as to believe that heaven is not en-"tailed upon any particular opinions in religion, ſo as "to ſacrifice their liberties in defence of them." And another writer on the ſame ſide [H], after letting us know, "that the friends of the diſſenters are ſeldom "found among miniſters of ſtate, adds, that they are to "be found among ſuch gentlemen, as have unto good "parts and knowledge, joined a freedom of thought "and free enquiry into matters of religion." We are very ſenſible how far ſuch freedom and latitude of thought are often carried in the preſent age: and can give ſome reaſons why ſeveral of the great proficients in that way either are, or would ſeem to be, friends to the diſſenters; but ſtill we truſt, that a diſregard to the principles of religion has neither yet made, nor will ever make, ſo great a progreſs as ſome perſons think. We doubt not but much the greater part of the people of England will continue to believe in Jeſus Chriſt: and that moſt of them, from a well-grounded perſuaſion that epiſcopacy was of apoſtolical inſtitution, will preſerve a ſuitable veneration for it: ſo that though they may be prejudiced againſt ſome particular prelates

[G] Letter to Mr. Holden, Lond. 1733. p. 26.
[H] The Intereſt of the Proteſtant Diſſenters conſidered. Lond. 1732. 2d. edit. p. 18.

amongſt

amongſt us, yet will not bear to ſee the order itſelf ſet at nought, and thrown out, to make way for the ſchemes of innovating ſpirits in modern times. They will rather think that the ſame order which at firſt propagated and ſettled Chriſtianity in the world, will be the beſt bulwark againſt Infidelity and Popery at preſent.

And even if this point ſhould not be conſidered ſo much as it ought to be in views of religion, yet moſt of the conſiderable families in England will, in all probability, be for ſupporting our church-eſtabliſhment, as the moſt agreeable to our civil conſtitution. Their own intereſt, joined with that of the public, will induce them to it. Whatever diſpoſitions there may have been formerly in ſome of our noble and ancient families to ſupport and encourage the diſſenting party; there are few, I believe, at preſent, who are not ſenſible that the ſtate of things is ſo much altered, as to require a ſuitable alteration in their conduct. For they ſee that the diſſenters, very far from being under ſuch hardſhips as they were in ſome parts of the reign of Charles II. have now all the liberty that can be deſired in reſpect to promoting their ſpiritual welfare. Their profeſſion and exerciſe of their religion are free and ſecure: they educate their children as they think fit; their teachers ſettle themſelves where they will; and aſſemble together as often as they pleaſe, with all the proper ſynodical forms to conſult and act as they find expedient. So that their caſe is no longer a matter of compaſſion. Their views at preſent are turned to the obtaining of power and influence, and the making themſelves of weight in the ſtate. But this increaſe of their ſecular intereſt has much leſs appearance of being for the ſervice of the civil conſtitution, than it had for ſome years after the Reſtoration: for then the humour of a great part of the nation ran ſtrongly to exalt the prerogative of the crown, perhaps more than was really for the intereſt of the public. On which account ſome patriots of that time thought it right to promote the diſſenting intereſt, as what would be a proper check and balance againſt the immoderate growth of the prerogative. But at preſent thoſe gentlemen, who know the true ſtate and intereſt of their country,

country, are ſenſible that there is no occaſion for this method. There are other circumſtances in the nation ſufficient, and more than ſufficient, to weigh againſt the crown. In particular, they ſee that the royal prerogative is circumſcribed and fixed by law, ſo that none of thoſe ſtretches that were formerly made of it on ſome occaſions can now have any place: that the ſupplies which are requiſite for the maintenance of the forces by ſea and land, depend upon annual grants by the parliament: and that even the revenues for the civil liſt expire upon each demiſe of the crown: ſo that if at any time when they are to be regranted, the Commons ſhould be diſpoſed, as they were for ſome time after the Revolution [1], or ſhould be wrought up to be yet more jealous of their liberties, and willing to increaſe them, thoſe revenues might, in that caſe, be clogged with ſuch conditions as would make the power of the crown precarious: while, on the other hand, that of the people ſtands on a ſure bottom, and muſt conſtantly increaſe; becauſe the [K] property, the ſource of power, is vaſtly on their ſide againſt the crown, even though the nobility be added to it; and muſt come to be more ſo in length of time. All gentlemen of ſenſe muſt be aware of the conſequences which ſuch a ſtate of things will naturally produce: and, as one of its effects already wrought, they ſee that the ſpirit of liberty runs with ſo ſtrong a courſe through the maſs of the people, that unleſs ſome very wiſe meaſures be taken, and conſtantly purſued to keep it in bounds, it muſt by degrees undermine and impair both the ari-

[1] See Burnet's Hiſtory of his own Times, vol. ii. p. 42, 43.

[K] Mr. Moyle, in his Eſſay on the Roman Government, vol. i. p. 73, ſays, "That land is the true center of power: and that the balance of dominion changes with the balance of property. This, "adds he, is an eternal truth, confirmed by the experience of all "ages and governments, and ſo fully demonſtrated by the great "Harrington in his Oceana, that it is as difficult to find out new "arguments for it, as it is to reſiſt the cogency of the old."

Mr. Nevil, in Plato Redivivus, p. 141, affirms, "that the natural "part of our government, which is power, is by the means of "property in the hands of the people:" which circumſtance he ſaid before, p. 37, "has made this country ſcarce governable by a "monarchy."

ſtocratical and regal parts of our conſtitution. They know that theſe two parts, including in the former the landed gentry, have a natural connection of intereſt with each other: that the clergy in ſuch an eſtabliſhment as ours, will be always in ſome degree dependant upon them; and both from that dependance, and from the manner of their education, will be diſpoſed, as far as they are able to act for their ſupport, and for preſerving the true balance of our conſtitution: ſo that any advantages poſſeſſed by the clergy, that are not of diſſervice to their ſpiritual function, or the public good, are really ſo much ſtrength to the gentry, the nobility, and the crown itſelf. And therefore if theſe ſhould make any unneceſſary breaches on the clergy, they would in effect cut through a bank, which the wiſdom of their anceſtors has raiſed for their defence, againſt that weight of the people, which the ſcripture compares to the many waters.

Upon theſe motives, therefore, of intereſt or of conſcience, or of both together, there is not much doubt but that the far greater part of the conſiderable families will be for ſupporting the eſtabliſhment of the church. And great numbers of the middle and lower people have ſo inbred a veneration for that church in which they have been baptized and brought up, and for that regal government under which this nation has ſo long flouriſhed, and is at preſent ſo happy, that they will not eaſily be wrought off from their adherence to them. So that if, on the one hand, the ſeveral ſects of the diſſenters joined with the men of latitude, and freedom of thought, and with thoſe who are averſe or very indifferent to a regal government, do make an appearance of great force againſt the church of England; there will not be wanting on the other ſide, a body of friends, united by principles of conſcience, and by a regard to the true intereſt of their country, joined with their own, to act together as occaſions may require, for the ſupport of this eſtabliſhment.

Now in theſe diſpoſitions of the nation, I think, they who know mankind, will hardly avoid foreſeeing, that, in caſe the Teſt-act be repealed, there muſt great animoſities and conteſts enſue: for the diſſenters will, in all

appearance, preſently apply themſelves to gain an intereſt in the corporate boroughs and other towns, to be choſen into the government of them, to be put into the commiſſions of peace and lieutenancy, and all other poſts of truſt, profit, or influence that may be within their reach: and probably by ſupporting one another in their applications for theſe places, or enforcing it by the joint weight of their whole body when it is neceſſary, they muſt often ſucceed in their pretenſions. For we may judge what their manner of applying will be, from what has been already ſaid by one who writes with an air of importance among them, and hath thought fit to give the world the hiſtory of their conſultations and proceedings, in order to procure the abolition of the teſt [1]. This gentleman having intimated that the application of the diſſenters in Ireland for the repeal of the Teſt-Act there, ought to have been enforced with the whole weight of the diſſenters in England; and having complained that that affair which had been promiſed by a very great man, as an earneſt of future favours to the diſſenters in England, had ſhamefully miſcarried; expreſſes his reſentment in the following terms: "are the "diſſenters," ſays he, "to be thus treated, in the face "of an election?"

—Manifeſta Fides, Danaûmque pateſcunt
Inſidiæ.— Virg. lib. ii. 309.

The reader will eaſily underſtand who is here accuſed of breach of faith, and who are reckoned inſidious enemies to the diſſenters: he will perceive, by the favours ſaid to be promiſed in the plural number, that the bare repeal of theſe acts in queſtion will hardly content them; and he will obſerve what their manner of application will be, to gain any advantages they think themſelves entitled to: whenever their aſſiſtance is wanted by the crown, they will expect to be proportionably conſidered.

[1] An Impartial Account of the late Tranſactions of the Diſſenters. Lond. 1734, p. 25, 26.

And will diſpoſitions or attempts of this kind, on the part of the diſſenters to enlarge their intereſt and power, raiſe no concern at all in the members of the church of England? Will theſe be in no degree ſolicitous to maintain their ground? Will the members of the boroughs and other corporations be contented that diſſenting miniſters [M] at London, ſhould direct them in the choice of the members of their bodies, and their repreſentatives in parliament? Will the ancient gentry, whoſe families have always had a natural intereſt in the boroughs, be eaſy in ſeeing it undermined, and in a way of being reduced to little or nothing? Will they negligently ſuffer a new ſet of people to come in upon them, and croſs their pretenſions to every poſt of truſt and profit? Will they be eaſy in ſeeing that church which their anceſtors have endowed and protected, which all the foreign churches ſo greatly reſpect, and which the arguments of the diſſenters have been unable to hurt, borne down by the growth of their ſecular intereſt? Will they not endeavour to form oppoſite intereſts [N], and take proper methods to prevent theſe inroads? And muſt not theſe meaſures produce animoſities, violent enmities, and their dire effects? May they not give opportunities, which perſons, diſaffected to the government, will improve to its diſadvantage? May no foreign enemy find their account in them? I think, any one who knows mankind, and the preſent ſtate of our parties and diſpoſitions in England, muſt ſee that theſe conſequences would be likely to follow upon a repeal of the Teſt-Act. Clouds much leſs than theſe appear to be in proſpect, have

[M] "There is a miniſter in London to whom the town of Ber-"wick has, upon every new choice, applied for his direction or aſ-"ſiſtance, above one-and-twenty years, and without whoſe influ-"ence the preſent members had never been ſo much as named "amongſt them." Remarks upon a paper, intituled, A Letter to Proteſtant Diſſenters. Lond. 1732, p. 17.

[N] "Can any one think that the bigotted and ſelf-intereſted "clergy, who, like harpies, are watching all opportunities, will "not ſeize the occaſion to trumpet their ſeditious alarms, and en-"deavour again to ſpread falſe notions of the church's danger? "Reflections on the Corporation and Teſt-Acts." Lond. 1732, p. 23.

ſometimes

ſometimes bred ſtorms which have torn up governments by the roots.

Now if theſe be the natural effects of ſuch an alteration; if there be juſt reaſon to believe that it will produce confuſion and danger, or great diſadvantage to the ſtate; then the vehement diſſenters, from whom this danger is likely to ariſe, may juſtly be excluded by any fit means, from having offices that will give them too much power and influence in the ſtate: for whatever rights or advantages any one may be entitled to as a good ſubject of the civil government, they muſt all be ſubmitted to conſiderations of the public welfare. Whenever this requires it ſhould be done, they may juſtly be abridged, in any degree which is neceſſary to it. For unleſs ſuch a courſe was taken, it would be impoſſible in many caſes for civil ſocieties to ſubſiſt: and therefore acquieſcence in this point is always a condition upon which men are members of ſuch ſocieties. From all theſe premiſes the conſequence is plain, that out of a due regard and concern for public welfare, the vehement diſſenters may juſtly be reſtrained by any fit means from taking offices in the ſtate. This is the firſt of the general points that I propoſed to make appear.

The other point with which I am concerned, is to ſhew, that the preſent method, in which this reſtraint is laid upon diſſenters, by obliging all men who take offices, to receive the ſacrament of the Lord's-ſupper, according to the uſage of the church of England, is alſo lawful. The objections againſt this method are, That it perverts the deſign of this ſacred inſtitution, and occaſions much wickedneſs in unworthy receivers. In anſwer to which, I firſt obſerve, that our laws apparently mean to require that this ſacrament ſhould be at all times received in commemoration of Chriſt's death, and with ſentiments of heart becoming that remembrance. For they require it ſhould be received as our church enjoins; whoſe declaration to this purpoſe in her liturgy, is, with all the other parts of that ſervice, confirmed by the act of Uniformity [o]. This act, which

[o] 13, 14 Charles II. chap. iv.

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is now in force, was ſo likewiſe at the time when the Teſt-act paſſed. And as ſubſequent laws muſt be deſigned to agree in their meaning and intent, with all thoſe precedent ones that are unrepealed; the Teſt-act therefore in requiring that all perſons who take public offices ſhould receive the communion according to the uſage of the church of England, muſt be ſuppoſed to require that they ſhould do it with ſuch diſpoſitions of heart as the church expects from them. Now the miniſter who notifies the time of a communion, is directed to acquaint the congregation, "that he purpoſes to "adminiſter to all ſuch as ſhall be religiouſly and devoutly diſpoſed, the moſt comfortable ſacrament of "the body and blood of Chriſt, to be by them received "in remembrance of his meritorious croſs and paſſion, "whereby alone we obtain remiſſion of our ſins, and "are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven.—He "is to exhort them in the mean ſeaſon, to conſider the "dignity of this holy myſtery, and the peril of unworthy receiving thereof: and ſo to ſearch and examine their own conſciences, and that not lightly, and "after the manner of diſſemblers with God, but ſo that "they may come holy and clean to ſuch an heavenly "feaſt. Therefore," ſays he, "if any of you be a "blaſphemer of God, an hinderer or ſlanderer of his "word, an adulterer, or be in malice or envy, or in "any other grievous crime; repent you of your ſins, "or elſe come not to that holy table."—Theſe paſſages ſhew how unjuſtly Mr. Chandler [P] has reproached our church "with encouraging infidels, heretics, and liber"tines into her communion." And as the meaning of the Teſt-act ought to be conſidered as agreeing in this point with that of the church; it is plain that this law cannot juſtly be charged with intending to require any thing contrary to the nature or the end of the ſacrament.

Nor can it be, with truth, objected, that the act of receiving it on occaſion of a civil or military office, does neceſſarily raiſe any contrary diſpoſitions of mind. For

[P] Vindication of a Paſſage of the Lord Biſhop of London's ſecond Paſtoral Letter. Lond. 1734. p. 38.

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it is evidently poſſible in the nature of the thing, that a man who communicates on ſuch an account, may, notwithſtanding this, piouſly remember the ſufferings and death of our bleſſed Saviour on our behalf; may have ſuitable movements of gratitude for them; may form reſolutions of obedience to his laws; and may, in particular, from thence be diſpoſed to real affection for all mankind: which diſpoſitions our Lord deſigned ſhould be excited or preſerved by this ſolemn act in remembrance of his death.

If the objectors will not allow this to be poſſible, they muſt then maintain, that no man ever did receive the ſacrament worthily, when he did it on occaſion of a public office. But this they will hardly preſume to affirm. For if they reflect on the number, the quality, and characters of the perſons who have received it on ſuch occaſions, they will, I believe, find reaſon to grant that ſome in this number have done it worthily. And ſuppoſing this granted, in the caſe of ſome perſons, it follows that the legal obligation which men may be under to communicate at a particular time, on a civil occaſion, does not, neceſſarily, or in the nature of the thing, prevent any man from taking this ſacrament at the ſame time, as he ought to do it in obedience to Chriſt: if this be true, then all men have it entirely in their power to communicate worthily, notwithſtanding they do it partly on a civil account: and admitting this, there is plainly no ground for ſaying, "that the ſacra-"ment is turned from its original deſign to a purpoſe "againſt its own nature and end." For though indeed the law obliges a man, if he takes an office, to communicate with the church of England, and from his ſo doing, makes a concluſion, which it applies to a civil purpoſe; yet, as his act of receiving the ſacrament may, at the ſame time, effectually ſerve all thoſe purpoſes of religion for which it was at firſt intended, it is evident that the ſacrament is not, by the law, in any degree perverted or abuſed.

But the enemies of the Teſt-act are loud in affirming, that, however poſſible it may be to communicate worthily upon taking an office, yet the contrary is often known

known to be done; and men are guilty of very great ſins upon ſuch occaſions: which ſins, though indeed they are principally chargeable on themſelves, yet are alſo to be juſtly charged on that act: for without ſuch a law, there could be no ſuch wickedneſs; and therefore the law is juſtly blameable, becauſe it not only occaſions ſin, but lays men under temptations to it: which practice is repugnant to Chriſtian charity, and to thoſe expreſs paſſages of the holy ſcriptures, that forbid us to lay ſtumbling-blocks, or occaſions to fall, in the way of our brethren.

In order to anſwer this objection, which has indeed a greater appearance of weight than any other that lies againſt the teſt; the firſt point to be determined is, whether all actions, which to other perſons will be occaſions or temptations to ſin, are on that account unlawful? Our objectors will hardly maintain the affirmative, if they conſider the practice of our Saviour and his apoſtles. For our Lord himſelf in going to feſtival entertainments, greatly offended the ſcrupulous Phariſees, and, in ſome ſenſe, occaſioned their ſinning, as they did, by throwing unjuſt reproaches [Q] upon him. Again, when he truſted what money he had to Judas Iſcariot, he knew that the cuſtody of it would tempt that ill-diſpoſed man to be a thief, as he actually [R] was. And to mention a caſe that more nearly relates to the ſacrament of the Lord's-ſupper: in the time of the apoſtles a feaſt of charity was joined to the communion, before or after it; in which the poorer ſort of Chriſtians were entertained at the expence of the more wealthy. This might very eaſily tempt ſome perſons to come to the communion chiefly or wholly with a view to partake of the feaſt that went with it. We have reaſon to think it did ſo: for [S] ſome came hungry, others got to be drunk there. Now in the caſes here mentioned, was the ſin of the Phariſees, or that of Judas, chargeable in any degree upon our Saviour? Or were the love-feaſts, on account of the ill effects they had upon vicious Chriſtians, unlawful to be continued? The former of

[Q] Luke vii. 34. [R] John xii. 6. [S] 1 Cor. xi. 21.

theſe

theſe queſtions needs no anſwer; and the latter may ſafely be anſwered in the negative. For, certainly, if the apoſtle had judged that thoſe feaſts were unlawful, he would have ſuppreſſed them; which was not done; for we find that they were commonly uſed [T] in the church, for more than two hundred years after our Saviour. From theſe examples, and from the nature of the thing itſelf, it is ſufficiently evident that an action may ſometimes be innocent and right, notwithſtanding that it leads other perſons into ſin. And yet I do alſo readily allow, that ill conſequences of this nature may, in ſeveral caſes, make actions unlawful that would not be ſo if thoſe conſequences were away.

Our farther enquiry, therefore, muſt be, in what caſes an action, innocent or indifferent in its own nature, becomes unlawful, by its being to others an occaſion of ſin. Now I humbly conceive, that a general rule in this matter is, that ſuch an action will be unlawful, whenever it is done without a ſufficiently important cauſe on the part of the agent, ſo that it proceeds from a want of due charity in him towards thoſe whom his action will affect. Both reaſon and the ſcripture agree in teaching us that men are not born for themſelves only. We are ſtrongly obliged to promote, as far as we are able (morally ſpeaking) the good of others, as well as our own. And the former of theſe, whenever it is of very great moment, ought to be purſued in preference to, and in ſome meaſure at the expence of the latter; ſuppoſing that the damage or inconvenience that we ſhall ſuffer on that account will not be too grievous. Whoever is unwilling to give up thus far his own advantage, in order to prevent a very great miſchief from coming upon others, eſpecially a miſchief of a ſpiritual nature, is wanting in the charity required by the goſpel; and an action repugnant to this great duty muſt always be unlawful.

This caſe is the ſubject of the fourteenth chapter of the Epiſtle to the Romans. Some ſcrupulous Chriſ-

[T] See Bingham's Antiquities of the Chriſtian Church, B. xv. chap. vii.

tians were at that time in danger to be offended, or led into ſin, by ſeeing others eat certain meats, which though they were indifferent in their own nature, and therefore innocently eatable by thoſe who had no ſcruples about them, were, by the weak brethren, accounted unlawful. In this ſtate of things, St. Paul, with regard to the ill effects that would be occaſioned by eating thoſe meats, determined that even the unſcrupulous Chriſtians were obliged to forbear them; and that to do otherwiſe would be a ſin. The ground of which deciſion I take to have been, that as theſe perſons could, without any great inconvenience to themſelves, get other meats to ſubſiſt upon, it would therefore be a want of charity in them to eat this offenſive kind of meats, and by ſo doing lead their weak brethren into ſin. But let us ſuppoſe the caſe had been ſuch, that the unſcrupulous Chriſtians could not have abſtained from the offenſive meats, without very great damage to themſelves and to the public: for inſtance, that in a town cloſely beſieged, no other but horſeflesh, accounted unlawful by the weak Chriſtians, had been procurable; and at the ſame time, the conſtitutions of the unſcrupulous Chriſtians, who were far the more in number, had been ſuch as would have ſuffered extremely unleſs they were allowed to eat ſome kind of fleſh. Would an hundred Chriſtians of this latter ſort have been obliged to abſtain from eating that fleſh, and ſo ruin their healths, of great moment to the public, merely to avoid offending a few ſuch weak and ill-judging brethren? I think this will not eaſily be ſaid, or at leaſt not made good.

I will put another caſe to the ſame purpoſe, that may fall in more with common life. There is one who has ſomewhat of mine in his poſſeſſion, which he thinks to be his own: and I know that his temper is ſo warm and obſtinate, that he would be likely to defend his poſſeſſion of this thing by all the methods in his power, eſpecially by taking iniquitous advantage of the forms of law: by doing which, againſt my juſt claim, he would probably be guilty of many ſins. I grant that in ſuch a caſe, as far as I only am concerned, I ſhould be obliged to forbear, either ſueing at law, or taking

any other method that would probably put this man upon ſinning, for a matter of no great moment to myſelf. But will any one ſay, that I ſhould be under the ſame obligation of forbearance, if an eſtate of great value and importance to me and to my family, were thus in queſtion between us? Undoubtedly I ſhould not. Becauſe though charity may oblige me to prevent any hurt to my neighbour, as far as I can do it without great damage to myſelf; yet, when I muſt ſuffer much by ſo doing, a regard to myſelf then juſtly takes place of my concern for him. This is the determination of Grotius [u] in the caſe. "We cannot avoid all things, ſays "he, that may occaſion other men to ſin: but thoſe "things we are obliged to avoid, which we are not put "upon, either by neceſſity, or any advantage," (of conſiderable moment).

And if this rule holds in private caſes, it may undoubtedly be followed in thoſe that relate to the intereſt of the public. For, unleſs this were allowable, no civil ſocieties could long ſubſiſt: becauſe hardly any regulations could be made for the public welfare, that might not prove occaſions of ſins to ſome perſons or other. And therefore the intereſt of all ſuch perſons, unreaſonably offended, eſpecially of thoſe who ſin, not from error, but preſumptuouſly againſt the clear light of their conſciences, may juſtly be made to give way to the ſafety or intereſt of the public. Upon this principle divers of our laws are continued in force, which yet are known to be occaſions or temptations to much wickedneſs. For inſtance, the laws which lay ſo high cuſtoms upon ſeveral commodities, occaſion and tempt men to the practice of importing them in a clandeſtine way without paying the cuſtom. The laws which oblige men to take oaths upon the entry of goods at the cuſtom-houſe, and in many other caſes of the like nature, do often tempt them to perjuries; which would doubtleſs be prevented, in a great degree, if there were no ſuch

[u] Annot. ad Rom. xiv. ver. 13. "Occaſiones omnes alienorum lapſuum vitare non poſſumus; ſed vitandæ ſunt eæ, ad quas neceſſitate nulla aut utilitate impellimur."

laws. But becauſe the intereſt of the public requires them, they may very well be juſtified, as even our diſſenters, I think, will allow. And by a moſt evident parity of reaſon, the Corporation and Teſt-Acts may equally be juſtified, whatever ill conſequences follow upon them, with regard to thoſe who unworthily receive the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, on account of offices in the ſtate.

However, I do very freely acknowledge that if any other method could be found out, not liable to theſe ill conſequences, and equally effectual to ſecure the eſtabliſhment of the church of England, from the attempts of thoſe who are ill-diſpoſed to it, our legiſlators would be obliged, in regard to the ſpiritual intereſt of ſome of our fellow-ſubjects, to prefer ſuch a method to that of the ſacramental teſt. And I believe that whenever ſuch a method ſhall be propoſed, it will readily be purſued by our ſuperiors in the ſtate, without any diſlike on the part of thoſe in the church. Indeed if we judge from the public acts, and well-known temper of moſt of her clergy, the diſpoſition of the church of England towards the diſſenters, appears to be truly moderate and Chriſtian. She is very willing they ſhould enjoy all that liberty of profeſſion and worſhip which they think needful to their ſpiritual welfare. She heartily wiſhes they may uſe it ſo, as to find and embrace the truth in love: and if they do not, ſhe commends them ſtill to the mercy of God, and prays that he will not lay their ſchiſm to their charge. But with this Chriſtian charity ſhe has, as ſhe ought to have, a proper mixture of Chriſtian prudence; ſo much as is needful to guard herſelf from ſuffering by their prejudices againſt her. She cannot but fear what might be, at proper conjunctures, the workings of ſuch ſpirits as can take offence at the colour and ſhape of a decent veſtment, or at a poſture of the body expreſſive of fitting humility and reverence in the worſhip of God. She has found by experience, that they who have ſtrained at things of this ſort have made no ſcruple to ſwallow her revenues and lay waſte her ſanctuaries. She only deſires to be ſecured againſt ſuch uſage in the time to come; and to be maintained

maintained upon that bottom which is neceſſary to prevent ſtrife and confuſion, and thereby to preſerve all parties a full and well regulated liberty of religion. To this purpoſe, the wiſeſt men of all ages have been ſenſible, that an eſtabliſhment of ſome one religion is neceſſary: and the church of England having been planted from the beginnings of the Reformation, and having hitherto brought forth much good fruit, to the honour of God and the welfare of this kingdom; it is but reaſonable ſhe ſhould keep her ſtation. Accordingly, ſhe truſts that all faithful members of her communion, however they may be otherwiſe diſtinguiſhed into parties, will uſe their endeavours to ſupport her in it; and ſhe humbly hopes that the bleſſing of God will make them ſucceſsful.

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